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Viewing cable 09GUAYAQUIL125, EVANGELICALS CLAIM NEW LAW THREATENS FREEDOM OF

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#09GUAYAQUIL125**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
09GUAYAQUIL125	2009-05-28 21:02	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Consulate Guayaquil

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.eluniverso.com/2011/04/22/1/1355/cable-209141.html>

VZCZCXYZ0000
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHGL #0125/01 1482102
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 282102Z MAY 09
FM AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9832
INFO RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 1042
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 3498
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 0527
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ MAY LIMA 3912

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUAYAQUIL 000125

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/27/2019
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [EC](#)
SUBJECT: EVANGELICALS CLAIM NEW LAW THREATENS FREEDOM OF RELIGION

REF: CARACAS 00471

Classified By: Consul General Douglas Griffit...

id: 209141
date: 5/28/2009 21:02
refid: 09GUAYAQUIL125
origin: Consulate Guayaquil
classification: CONFIDENTIAL
destination: 09CARACAS471
header:
VZCZCXYZ0000
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHGL #0125/01 1482102
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 282102Z MAY 09
FM AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9832
INFO RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 1042
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 3498
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 0527
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ MAY LIMA 3912

----- header ends -----

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUAYAQUIL 000125

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/27/2019
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [EC](#)
SUBJECT: EVANGELICALS CLAIM NEW LAW THREATENS FREEDOM OF
RELIGION

REF: CARACAS 00471

Classified By: Consul General Douglas Griffiths for reasons 1.4 (b) and
(d)

11. (C) Summary: Ecuador's growing evangelical movement is concerned that a 2008 presidential decree requiring churches to register with the government and identify their parishioners is a move to squelch the outspoken movement and could have implications for freedom of religion. The decree groups all non-profit social organizations under the same governing regulations, whereas before churches were governed by the Ley de Culto (Law of Worship) and NGOs were governed by a separate set of regulations. The GOE claims this is an attempt to ensure "more transparency and accountability of public funds." However, our Evangelical contacts insist that they have never taken public funds, and should not be subject to government controls. The pastors believe this change is a thinly-veiled attempt by the GOE to silence the often uncooperative Evangelical movement. End Summary.

12. (C) PolOff met May 7 with a group of five evangelical preachers from the Guayaquil area including Pastor Francisco Loor, president of the Association of Evangelical Preachers. They emphasized their fears that elements in the GOE are attempting to co-opt the oft outspoken evangelical movement and note that similar models were used in Venezuela (reftel) and Bolivia. According to Loor, the model is as follows: Once all churches are registered as NGOs, they will have certain responsibilities to "periodically report" to the government. They claim that it is unclear as to what should be reported and how often. Any NGOs that do not comply with the law can be dissolved by the GOE and have their property seized. The seized property will then be turned over to another NGO with the same goals. With churches now classified as NGOs, the group fears that this means the GOE will be able to seize church assets and give them to other churches that are friendly to the government. Given the evangelical movement's open opposition to the Correa government (they campaigned heavily against the new constitution), they believe this is an attempt on the part of the Ecuadorian government to force cooperation from a very vocal and sizeable opposition block. They believe that the very threat of government seizure is a direct violation of the separation of church and state.

¶3. (C) On May 6 Loor and his group of pastors lost a lawsuit against the government claiming that Presidential Decree No. 982 of 2008 was unconstitutional. However, they are convinced that the judge was pressured by the government to rule against them. According to their attorney, the judge on the case heard part of the trial, and then went on vacation to Italy. While in Italy, a different judge heard the rest of the case. When the original judge returned from his vacation, he ruled against them on his first day back without hearing the rest of the case. Loor's attorney will appeal the decision. If the appeal fails, Loor plans to take the case to the OAS Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

¶4. (C) When asked why only the Evangelicals are speaking out against the change, Loor assured PolOff that other religious groups were concerned as well, but the Evangelicals were the most outspoken. Among the groups, he claimed, are the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses. The Roman Catholic Church, by far the largest denomination in Ecuador, was not subject to the new decree, as the Vatican has a separate agreement with the GOE. However, a few of the pastors noted that concern in the Catholic Church is growing and that, although not openly opposed to the new regulations, the church was quietly supporting their opposition. Indeed, in a recent discussion with the Consul General, the President of the Episcopal Conference, Archbishop Arregui, said that he was worried that the new law was the first step in a strategic effort to stifle dissent. Arregui suggested that Correa would follow the "Chavez model" of picking fights with the Church in an effort to erode the prestige and authority of the Church hierarchy.

¶5. (C) Ministry of Government and Police Under Secretary Dr. Ramiro Rivadeneira told embassy officers that the 2008 decree was an attempt to ensure that the non-profit status that was granted to more than 2,200 registered religious groups by the 1937 Ley de Culto was actually warranted by the groups' financial dealings. Rivadeneira stated that the reporting requirements would be for those groups who received government funds to report how they were spending the government's money. All reporting requirements were the same for both religious groups and NGOs since they were all

non-profit organizations. Rivadeneira claimed that the Ministry plans on convening religious leaders for a roundtable discussion to draft a new Ley de Culto later this year. The new law will address many of the religious leaders' current concerns and will again separate religious groups from NGOs.

¶6. (C) Comment: The Correa government has made several attempts to regulate the NGO sector (Quito septel), moves that could be interpreted as possible attacks on freedom of speech, religion, or association. While the evangelical movement lost the first round of legal battles, we expect that its leaders will continue advocating for their autonomy. Evangelical churches in Ecuador have grown dramatically in poor sectors of Guayaquil (and elsewhere), and have a great deal of credibility. Given Correa's fading popularity in some of these same areas, the GOE will have to act carefully in implementing the new decree or risk encouraging greater opposition.

GRIFFITHS

=====CABLE ENDS=====